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THE PRESENT STATE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY IN JAPAN

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My primary interest as a developmental psychologist has been, in the last few years, the study of social and emotional development in the first part of life. Because this was my third visit to Japan I was well acquainted with much of the research being generated by my Japanese colleagues. The research being undertaken in the three cities that I visited differed in both the style of work being done as well as in the areas of inquiry. For example, in Nagoya under the able leadership of Professor Hideo Kojima a variety of topics about child development are being considered. The group of researchers who center around Professor Kojima have a wide and varied group of interests, including the study of honorifics as they appear in the Japanese language, sibling relationships, the study of development across the life span, including adolescence and infancy. In addition there is a strong theoretical approach as witnessed in two particular pieces of work, one, the history of child rearing tradition in Japan ; and two, a study of the stages of development as seen both concurrently from the view of undergraduate students and historically by considered Japanese art and art history. The work at Nagoya constitutes, in part, an attempt to establish and develop a child development tradition which is uniquely Japanese. In addition, Professor Kojima and his group shows interest in a variety of problems whose origins grow out of the child development work of the United States. A part of the strength of this group lies in Professor Kojima's ability to tolerate a diversity of interests and at the same time the interconnectedness of some of these problems. The published and unpublished papers of this group are and will provide strong, and at times alternative theories of child development to those expounded by American scientists. Professor Yamada and others are to be commended for their innovative and important research activity. Continued contact and publications of that group are bound to have important implication for developmental research throughout the world. My week in Nagoya gave me the opportunity to explore some of the interesting cross-cultural differences in the concept of aging which any theory of human development must take into account.

The second site of my visit, the Research and Clinical Center for Child Development, as directed by Professor Miyake, constitutes a unique and valuable resource, not only for Japan but for other parts of the world as well. Professor Miyake and his

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research associate Shing-jen Chen, and a host of other collaborators have one of the best equipped and most impressive research centers in child development that I have had the pleasure to visit in many countries. In these quarters a variety of important research activities are taking place focusing on the social and emotional development of children in the opening years of life. Most outstanding is the long term longitudinal effort being undertaken by Professor Miyake. This longitudinal research, with its parallel concerns to American developmental research providing answers not only to basic research questions dealing with development but also in providing valuable information on the effects of culture on infant and young child development.

The longitudinal program of research is a unique undertaking and difficult to accomplish and the success in following a large group of children in two cohorts that Professor Miyake and his staff have undertaken bode well for the kind of effort that needs to be expended in order to study important issues of change and growth. The specific problems that Miyake and his group have undertaken to explore vary from the study of social influences and development of social relationships to the exploration of the socialization of emotional and social behavior. The recent work of Mr. Chen, studying early biological regulatory mechanisms such as response to noxious stimuli, shows a broadening of the group's interest into the area of biological factors as they effect development. The number of interrelated problems, the breadth of the research effort and the value to theories of development is impressive.

Also important in this regard is the extensive international contacts that Professor Miyake has established over the last five-to ten years. These contacts have resulted in flow of foreign visitors to his Center and infusion of ideas about development. Moreover the work of the Center, through an annual bulletin, has enabled many investigators throughout the world to follow the work of this group, thus the international flavor of the research and the central role of the research to the problems of development that many scientists in several countries are exploring.

The third city that I visited, Tokyo, is the most difficult to describe because of the diverse and separate research activity being conducted. Of particular note is Professor Keiko Takahashi's work on social network. I have been familiar with Professor Takahashi's work for a number of years and have found it to be creative, scholarly and in the forefront of theories pertaining to social development. Unfortunately, Professor Takahashi works alone and therefore proceeds more slowly than if she were involved in a larger research group (this problem, as well as others, will be discussed below under recommendation). In addition to Dr. Takahashi there are two other young investigators, Professor Suda and Professor Kawakami who are also doing interesting work in mother-child interaction and attempting to understand, through molecular analysis, some of the differences in American and Japanese parenting styles. This work, looking in fine detail at mother-child interactions, parallels in some sense, some of the more global work being conducted by professor Miyake's group in which maternal attitudes toward children's transgression are being studied cross-culturally.

Unlike Nagoya and Sapporo, Tokyo being a large and capital city has a diverse group of researchers with little interconnection. This is unfortunate since the research effort could be facilitated by a more interactive system. In this regard I should also like

to address the work of Professor Kosawa in Kobe and his collaborators in Tokyo. They provide another example of longitudinal studies being conducted in Japan at the present moment. Although my contact with professor Kosawa is limited to a brief meeting we are in consultation and hope to establish collaborative effort since his sample of Japanese children will reach the age of six to nine, an age which is comparable to the ages of the subjects in our longitudinal study.

There are of course other groups in other parts of Japan who undoubtedly are working on important developmental problems. There are other investigators who, are students and young faculty who are doing important research. In fact I found, in general, the research activity taking place in Japan in early child development to be a complex and diverse enterprise, something which I had not anticipated prior to my visit to Japan.

SUGGESTIONS

One of the hallmarks of Japanese society and one which in fact may distinguish it from the United States, is the society's strong commitment to the care of its young children. Both as an American parent and a scientist I was over and over again impressed by the time, energy, and resource expended on young children in Japan. Thus, it comes as some surprise to observe that this societal commitment is less well expressed in terms of the investment in the scientific exploration of child development in Japan. Over and over again I was impressed both through what I saw and what I heard of the difficulties in doing research in Japan at present. Most of this concern centered around the lack of financial resource to carry out the needed research. I think this is particularly important for Japan and not only for the care of Japanese children, but because of the rapid changing nature of Japanese society and its potential impact on child rearing. I believe that it is critical that Japanese parental attitudes and goals for child development be explored during this period of change in Japan. Such an effort requires that the Japanese government be prepared to invest large sums of money in this enterprise. Perhaps the best example I can point to is the Research and Clinical Center for Child Development in Sapporo. Under Professor Miyake's guidance, an elaborate and significant research facility has been established. A physical plan and equipment exist at the University for the study of child development which would be difficult to replicate anywhere else. Yet the research that Professor Miyake and his group undertake is hampered by lack of resource. Financial resources which would enable Professor Miyake to hire a research assistant and even a secretary are needed. A longitudinal research effort of the magnitude being undertaken by professor Miyake requires a proper staff to help him. In this regard it should be mentioned that Professor Miyake is forced to wear two hats ; as chief administrative officer of the Center and at the same time, chief intellectual spirit. It is clear that such a dual role taxes both capacities and I would strongly recommend a second position with some type of permanent funding. This position would be invaluable in order for him to run this center.

In general it seems to me that given the Japanese society's commitment to early child development, and given the rapidly changing nature of Japanese society, the Japanese government undertake systematic and long term investment in research activities pertaining to early child development. In that regard I would suggest that one or two

centers, similar to the one in Sapporo, be set up throughout Japan. These centers should be provided with long term funding which would enable the principal investigators to 1) undertake systematic research in early childhood development ; 2) train a new generation of developmental scientists ; 3) investigate problems particularly unique to the changes in Japanese society (such as increase in divorce, decrease in intergenerational family living, increase in maternal working, and changing sex roles). These societal changes are bound to have profound effects on child development practices and should be studied.

In addition, I would recommend that a creation of a study group made up of young scientists in the developmental area be established. Such a study group would increase the contact of investigators in developmental science throughout Japan. Moreover by establishing these study groups it is possible to lay the foundation for the introduction of a more systematic education of a new generation of developmental scientists. In this regard my previous experience with a national effort to build a developmental science may be useful. About ten years ago, the Volkswagen corporation supported an effort of German academicians to educate a new young cohort of German developmental scientists. To do this, funds were generated for two activities. First, funds were generated for a summer institute which brought most of the young German developmental scientists together in one place with three dozen or so American developmental scientists. The Americans were invited to come to this institute, each lecturing approximately 3-4 days. In this way, the younger German scientists were able to meet the experienced American investigators, to interact with them in an interpersonal manner and therefore, establish contacts which would exist long after the summer institute was over. Most investigators who participated in this program found it to be extremely useful and I personally established contacts which to this day continue. The second activity supported by the Volkswagen company was the awarding of small cross-cultural grants which require that the young German scientists collaborate with an experienced American scientist on some mutually interesting project. This accomplished two goals, 1) it further trained the young German scientists ; 2) it helped to maintain contact between the German and American scientists ; and 3) it generated valuable data on cross-cultural issues. I would recommend that either the Japanese government or Japanese business be urged to participate in such an effort.

It is clear that the Japanese developmental scientists are making great progress. The research that I observed on this trip is considerably improved, both in conceptualization and in empirical technique and one can be sure that within the next decade developmental science in Japan will play an increasingly important role in the field. Nevertheless this young and growing area needs nurturance, especially in the context of a rapidly changing society. Thus, my suggestions to increase the funding of developmental research are based on 1) the fact that a core group of good developmental scientists now exist in Japan that could profit from such experience ; and 2) the changing nature and the immediacy of some of the problems facing Japanese society makes such an effort essential.